THE Spectrum

1998

A Magazine of Creative Arts
Villa Julie College

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Prize Winners

Prose *Joe Goforth*

Poetry *Olivia Bitting*

Art *Lynn Fagley*

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Come to Me

leave them all and come to me
i hate to see you burning free
from all restraints of love
the ties and obligations
strung by these
half-hearted
sleep-walking
heroes of wax kingdoms
are ties and obligations
far too weak and melting wet
and glistening in an
unconscious
tribute
to your independence

i say come to me
come and wrap your arms around
my illnesses
come and run your fingers through
my shortcomings
i flaunt them readily
as these waxen figures hide them
until you blaze beyond and find it anyway
you know i lie to them
i fly to spy on them
i know how to get by them

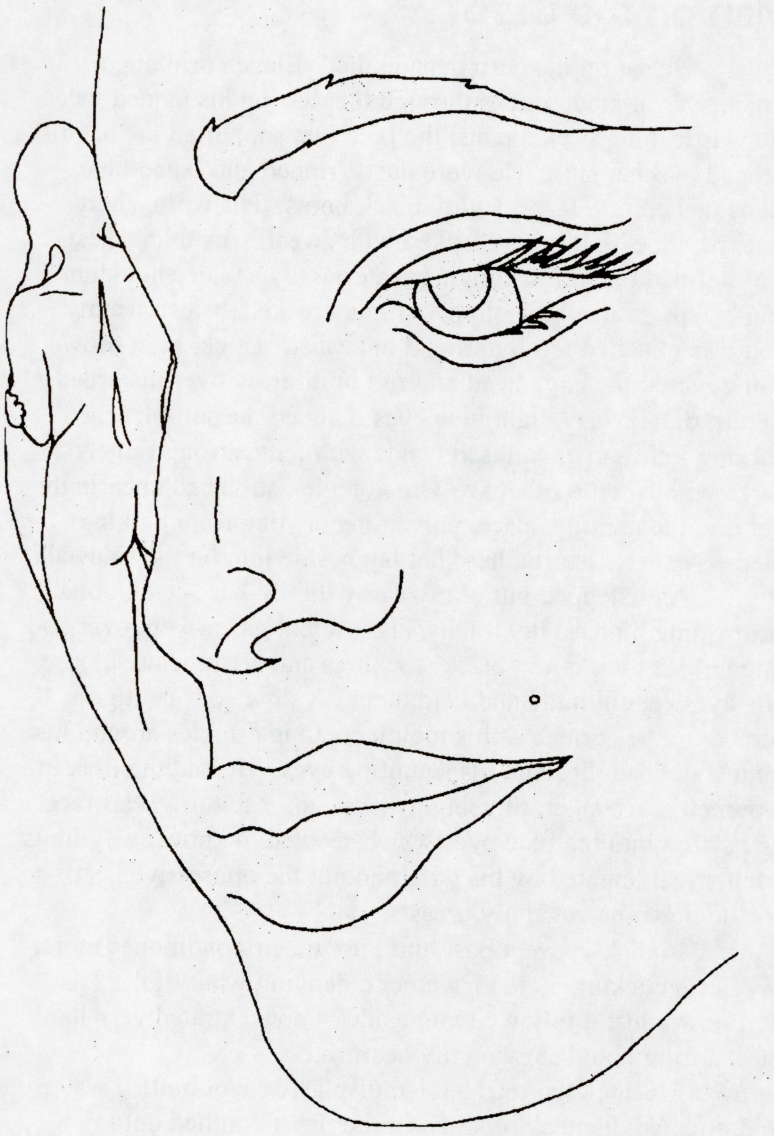
come to me
in my secret little pocket of the world
where music and the moon
are entities
where i've found a few
guardian angels
here
where there is only me
only a few candles burning
out of their waxen cloaks and jeans
reminding me
this room is by far safer
than their slippery
melting world
i am not beautiful or deep as you
my eyes will never be
bottomless
as yours are
but there is warmth
and dry-eyed windows
peering out on silver-mooned
star-studded midnight tapestries
just for you
and i shall cling to you
for my dear life
love come to me

Olivia Bitting

Insanity

i sit in total darkness
as tears pour down my face
a sea of misery
an ocean of loneliness
endless desperation
hoping for life to change
quiet, still aggression
everything strange
beautiful sea of rage
flowing river of tears
a scream let loose
in the ever-blowing wind

Paula Ensor



Lynn Fagley

Man on the Curb

He sat on the curb outside the 7-Eleven drinking a Coke. Sweat made tracks through the dust on his tanned face. He was leaning back against the pole that supported the handicapped parking sign. He wore dusty, ripped and faded blue jeans tucked into large, sturdy black boots. His worn, short-sleeved, blue T-shirt was soaked with sweat. His thick chest was defined under the clinging material. His wide shoulders and biceps strained the cloth. An old cracked, brown leather belt was clinched tightly around his waist. Thick, light brown hair covered his large head and fell in disarray over his broad forehead. His lazy, light blue eyes scanned the sun-bleached parking lot. Large, callused hands with long, strong fingers caressed his bottle of Coke. One long leg stretched uncaringly out into the parking space, preventing anyone from parking there. A dusty, scarred hard hat lay beside him on the sidewalk.

As I stepped out of my car, with my knee-length black skirt riding high on my thighs, his insolent gaze swept over and up me. He took in my black stockings and crisp, white blouse. His eyes caught mine and held them. A slow confident grin turned up the corners of his mouth creating crinkles around his almost delicate lips and his squinting eyes. He had the look of a perpetual teenager, refusing to grow up. I felt my heart race as I stared into the blue eyes which seemed to know everything. I felt sweat, created by his gaze and not the oppressive heat, trickle down between my breasts.

I quickly swept past him into the air-conditioned store, my heels clicking on the pavement, denying what I felt. His soft, low whistle followed me inside. I concentrated very hard on ignoring it and slowing my heart rate.

I located the refrigerated display case of bottled water and grabbed the neck of an Evian bottle. I counted out my change and then straightened my shoulders, determined to sweep past the relaxing man as if he didn't exist. I wanted to deny him the very idea that he had any power over me. I

stepped out into the overwhelming heat--but he was gone. Only an empty Coke bottle stood next to the handicapped parking sign. I rushed toward the air-conditioned haven of my car and pulled out of the parking lot. I refused to believe that I was sorry he was gone.

As I waited at the corner for the light to turn green, I glanced to my left. There, just inside the corner of the construction site, he stood. His hands gripped the wire fence above his head as if he were about to climb out. His hard hat was pushed back and his hair clung to his sweaty forehead. His stance was relaxed with one leg slightly bent. He stared right at me with that slow smile. The light changed, and as I began to move forward, he nodded at me.

Adina Kadden

Amy Saxmann

The Day Our Lives Changed Forever

The blaring alarm sounded at 7:30 in the morning. Meg awoke from her deep sleep, rolled over and scrambled to find the snooze button. "Uh, it's too early for a Saturday. Just five more minutes, that's all I need." Meg yanked the covers up to her neck and buried her head in her fluffy feather pillow. Princess, her black Persian cat, jumped up on the bed and began purring and nudging Meg with her head.

"All right Princess, I hear you. I know you're hungry. I'm getting up. Give me five more minutes." Meg began to doze again, when she was startled by the ringing phone.

"Hello," Meg answered with her groggy voice.

"Did I wake you?" the caller asked. "I thought you'd be up and ready to go."

"I'm working on it," Meg replied. "I just haven't made it that far yet."

"A little hung over from last night, are you? When I dropped you off, I figured you'd be feeling a little rough this morning."

"Oh, Ryan, you just think you know everything about me. Well, for your information, I am feeling just fine this morning."

"Boy, I thought by the looks of things last night you would be in no shape to go boating today."

"Well, after you dropped me off, I gulped a big glass of water and took two extra-strength Excedrins before going to bed. Let me tell you, I really think that saved me from feeling so rough this morning. So tell me, on your way home last night, did you remember to pick up the sandwich meats and beer for today?"

"Well, kind of," replied Ryan.

"What do you mean, kind of? Either you did or you didn't."

"Hey, give me half credit. I remembered to stop and get a case of beer, but I kind of forgot about the lunch meats."

"Oh, sure, of course you remembered the beer. I knew we should have stopped on our way home last night to get everything for today. Well, I'll tell you what. After I jump in the shower and get dressed, I'll run down to Bunky's Sub Shop and get some subs and chips to bring along. Sound good?"

"Yeah, sounds great to me. You know, Meg, I am the luckiest guy in the world."

"Oh yeah? Why do you say that?"

"Because I have you. Just think, only two more months and we'll be together forever."

"Yeah, if I make it that long. I'll tell you Ryan, I am feeling so stressed out lately. This wedding thing isn't all it's cracked up to be. I guess I'm just feeling a little overwhelmed with all the details." "Look Meg, everything will be just fine. You have done such a great job at coordinating everything. Think about it, 'most everything is already done."

"Yeah, I guess you're right. I'm just getting a little nervous now that the day's getting closer. Well, enough of that. I am truly looking forward to getting out today, so let me get my butt out of bed and get ready."

"All right. I'll get the boat hooked up and head on over. Should I bring the ski equipment so you can maybe try some skiing, or are you going to chicken out again?"

"We'll just have to wait and see. I'm not committing to anything right now."

"Okay, okay, Meg. I won't bug you about it, but I do hope you decide to at least give it a try. I'll be over in about an hour. Will that give you enough time to get ready and get to the store?"

"Yeah, I'll be ready. See you in a bit."

"Okay, love you, Meg."

"Love you, too."

Meg got out of bed and threw the comforter up over the pillows then headed for the shower. After her shower and breakfast, she ran down to the sub shop. When she returned, she packed a picnic basket and grabbed some beach towels.

She wasn't back long when Ryan pulled up in front of the house in his blue pick-up with the 17-foot power-boat attached to the back.

Meg grabbed all the stuff and met Ryan at the truck. Ryan took the towels and basket out of Meg's arms and packed it in the back of the truck with the cooler.

"Did you remember your sunscreen, Meg?" he asked. "You remember the last time we went out, you came home looking like a lobster."

"I think I have everything. I packed the sunscreen, sandwiches, chips, fruit, beach towels and the cell phone."

"The cell phone? Who are you going to call?"

"I'm not planning to call anyone, but you never know if and when you'll need it. It's just nice to have along for the peace of mind."

"Yeah, I guess you're right. You never know, we may get out there and decide that we want to order a pizza."

"Okay, smart-ass. You don't have to be so sarcastic this early in the morning. I still don't know why you insisted on going out so early. We could have slept in, especially since it's Saturday."

"Look, do you want to get a whole day in or what? It's too beautiful to waste any time. Maybe we can get some skiing and fishing in. Or, maybe we can just dock somewhere and soak up some sun and go swimming."

"Yeah, you're right. Once we get out there, we're going to wish we had even more time. Well, let's hit the road."

The 40-minute drive to the river went by quickly. When they pulled into the marina, both were surprised by all the vehicles already in the parking lot. They knew it was going to be a crowded day out on the water. Ryan backed the boat down the ramp while Meg helped guide it into the water. Meg roped off the boat at the dock and began loading their things while Ryan parked the truck.

"Well, have we got everything?"

"Yeah, I believe so," answered Meg.

Ryan slipped into the driver's seat, and Meg untied the rope and pushed the boat away from the dock. Meg, trying to keep her balance, walked to the front of the boat, spread her towel on the seat, and sat down.

"You better get some lotion on, babe."

"Yeah, I know. I was just getting ready to."

"Hey Meg, can you hand me a beer out of the cooler?"

"Already? Heck, it's only 10:00."

"So? That's never stopped us before."

Meg opened the cooler and got out two beers. She handed one to Ryan.

"Where are we heading?"

"I don't know. What are you up for?"

"Well, I'm not up for skiing yet. The water feels too cold for me this early in the morning. Let's just do some cruising and maybe head over toward Wye Island."

"Wye Island? Heck, that's at least a two hour ride."

"Two hours? I didn't think it took us that long. Are you sure? I thought it took us about an hour the last time we went. Besides, what difference does it make? We're going to be out on the water all day. It beats driving around in circles for two hours."

"Yeah, I guess you're right. Wye Island is nice, and it's usually never that crowded. By the time we get there, it will be about lunch time, and we can have our picnic and maybe do some swimming."

"Great idea! Wye Island, here we come."

It was close to 12 noon when Wye Island came into view. "There it is. You were right Ryan, it took us nearly two hours to get here."

"Yeah two hours and a 12 pack later. I'm feeling mighty fine right about now. How about you?"

"Well I know I have a buzz, and I'm definitely getting hungry. I can't wait to get out, eat and do some swimming. I'm surprised there are no other boats at the island."

"Huh, no wonder, all the boats are out in the bay. It

seems like every time we come out on the water, it gets more and more congested."

Ryan slowly maneuvered the boat toward the island until the underside of the boat touched bottom. He threw out the anchor and turned off the motor. Meg jumped out into the ankle deep water.

"Wow, this water feels mighty cold. It goes right through you."

"Well don't go running off just yet."

Ryan handed Meg a blanket and the picnic basket. He then grabbed the cooler, sat on the edge and slid off the boat. They both staggered to shore.

"You ready for lunch?"

"Sure am. Let's eat, I'm starved. You want another beer?"

"Nah, I'm already feeling kind of lightheaded. I think I better take a break for awhile. Don't you think you've had enough for now?"

"Meg, you know sometimes you act more like my mother than my wife-to-be. I know how much I can handle. Don't worry, okay? Just let me be."

Meg ignored his comment. She knew there was no use dwelling on that subject. Ryan's drinking was the one thing that always made Meg feel uncomfortable. It always seemed like whenever he would start drinking, he never knew when to stop. She knew it was probably best just to change the subject.

"Lunch is great, and it sure hit the spot."

"Yeah, I'm sorry I forgot to pick up the lunch meats earlier (hiccup), but these subs sure taste mighty (hiccup) fine. Hey Meg, can you hand me another beer out of the cooler?"

Meg reached over and grabbed another beer from the cooler. As she handed the beer over to Ryan, she began to speak, then suddenly decided against it. They finished their lunch in silence. After they ate, Meg cleaned up, and Ryan walked back to the boat.

"What are you doing?"

"I thought I would get the Frisbee. Feel like playing?"

"Sure, why not."

Meg and Ryan threw the Frisbee back and forth.

"Boy, you're not doing so hot today, are you? Must be all those beers you had," laughed Meg.

"Nah, it must be because the wind is picking up."

"Yeah, right. Excuses, excuses."

With that, Ryan dropped the Frisbee and began to chase Meg around. It didn't take much to catch up to her. They both fell to the ground and began wrestling. Ryan started tickling Meg until she was almost breathless. They wrestled and giggled and continued to chase each other. Ryan then began running toward the water, stripping off his shirt and sandals.

"Where are you going?"

"Swimming. Come on in. The water's nice and refreshing."

"Refreshing? It's freezing cold. I can't believe you're going in."

"I can't feel a thing. It's almost numbing."

Ryan started to dive and do somersaults in the water. Meg watched and said under her breath, "I can't believe he got right in. The water is freezing cold. Look at him. He's acting like a nut." She yelled out to him.

"Ryan get back here. You're drunk, and the water is freezing cold."

"Come on in, scardy cat. It's not that cold." He continued to dive deep in the water and swim farther out.

"Come on, Ryan, get back here. Let's just lie out in the sun. The water's too cold. Besides, you're drunk, and you shouldn't be swimming."

Meg continued to call out to Ryan, but she could only see him motioning for her to get into the water. Meg began to yell at the top of her lungs.

"Ryan Bittner, get your ass back here! You're getting too far out. Come on, you're starting to scare me."

Annie Scholtes

As Meg watched from the island, Ryan splashed his arms up and down. Meg wondered what the heck he was doing. The next minute he dunked under the water. He popped back up, and his arms continued to splash up and down.

Meg began to panic. She ran over to the boat. Struggling, she climbed in, pulled up the anchor, and fumbled with the keys. She put the boat in reverse and headed over to where Ryan had been swimming. She turned off the engine and again called out to him. He was nowhere in sight. Meg grabbed her cellular phone and dialed 911.

Jill Klein

Cobblestones

Click-click, click-click, click-click. The hard metal wheels of the carriage echo throughout the rain-filled downtown streets. Click-click, click-click. Sunny, the kindhearted horsepower for the carriage, seems not to notice the downpour of wind and rain. Instead, she just seems content to avoid pedestrians and transit buses while pulling the young couple around the sparkling nighttime waters of the harbor. Click-click, click-click. The two passengers are not bothered by the weather either; the lights are still reflecting off the water, the carriage is still moving, and they still have each other.

Click-click, click-click, click-click. Drizzling drops of rain sneak into the carriage compartment, gently landing on the couple's already saturated clothes. The small drops become lost in the wet clothes, much like the young people are lost in each other's eyes. Click-click, click-click. Settling down, the rain turns into a peaceful mist delicately sweeping over the city, as if imitating the blissful mood of the couple holding each other in Sunny's carriage. Click-click, click-click, click-click.

The two passengers share their hopes and dreams as the wheels of the carriage ascend and descend the cobblestones of the damp streets. Each cobblestone the wagon wheels triumph over becomes a stepping stone for the young couple. Their hopes and dreams build upon each other. Click-click, click-click. Love has blossomed between them. Sunny leads the carriage back up the hill to drop the couple off. Their carriage ride is over for tonight, but they hold each other even tighter knowing that many more cobblestones pave their future.

Click-click, click-click, click-click.

Joe Goforth

Train

Coltrain sat on the curb with a bottle of Nighttrain by his side. He once said to a crowd of people that Nighttrain was his drink of choice because in this day and age two trains are always crashing. He was drunk when he made this statement—thus the logic.

As he turned to pick up the bottle—which was snuggly wrapped in a brown paper bag—he caught a glimpse of himself in the shiny bumper of a car. He laughed as he moved closer to the distorted figure.

He saw himself. His hair was tight and matted together like wool. The whites of his eyes were brown. There was a white crusty line beneath his nose. His lips were cracked. His clothing was tattered and dusty. He hated viewing himself.

He smelled himself. His underarms released an unspeakable odor that could be detected by any passerby. The smell of the Nighttrain lingered on his breath and when he burped the smell erupted from his stomach. His clothes held the smell of the wine as well. They also smelled like urine and day old feces. The odors were pungent and piercing.

"Damn, I stink," he said.

He thought and wondered how he had gotten to this point. He licked his wind-burnt lips and raised the bottle of wine. He took a few swallows and returned the bottle to its place, next to him on the curb.

"I wasn't always a pissy drunk," he said.

Four years before he was the number one Olympic prospect for boxing. When he graduated from high school, he elected not to go to college but to pursue his boxing career instead. He had a personal coach—Kirby "Maddog" Berenstein—at the Blue Horizon where he worked out.

"Coltrain, you got precision and a hungry desire to be the best," Maddog told him. "Boy, you know I am the envy of every coach in America 'cause I got you under my wing."

"Maddog, you really think I got it?" Coltrain asked.

"Hell, yeah, you got it. You got the art form, but now you got to get the science and that's what ole Maddog is here for," he told Coltrain.

Coltrain's life was perfect.

One night on his way home from practicing, tragedy struck.

He remembered that night as if it were yesterday. He could still hear the screeching brakes, the sirens from the emergency crews, and the sound of metal being torn into pieces.

"Coltrain, get your pissy ass away from my car," a woman yelled from a second-story window.

He lifted the bottle to his mouth once more and finished its contents. He then lifted himself with his arms into his wheelchair. Although it was difficult for him to get back into his chair, he still climbed out at least once a day to escape the confinement. He neatly tucked each of his pants legs under his stumps—to prevent them from getting tangled in the spokes of his wheels. He strapped himself into the chair. Coltrain glanced up and saw the woman still waiting for him to move on. He grabbed the wheels and began to turn them as he rolled slowly down the street.

He began to sing in a melodious voice, "Shotgun, get 'um 'fore he run now, do the jerk baby. . . . ."

Nikkia Rowe

To Be Read in a Dark Room

The prey is alone. Perfect. Anything to make the hunt easy. He doesn't hear a thing, either. He's too busy reading a magazine to notice anything. Move silently. Don't make a sound. He hears nothing.

Wait, he's heard something now. His head shifts to the left. Nothing.

Darkness there and nothing more. He goes back to reading again. He's nervous. I love it when they're nervous. He has a vague ghost of a feeling that there is something there but there isn't. Not really. He thinks that he's alone. But deep down inside his subconscious he senses something. But there's nothing there. For a brief instant I see his face. His eyes are stretched out and his pupils are enlarged to gather the dim light. I hear his breath; short and whisper thin. Cats must love that look when they stalk mice.

That's right, just keep reading. There's nothing behind you.

I know how to hide in the shadows. Hell, I know how to become the shadows. I'm completely invisible in the gloom. My hands uncoil their fingers like gluttonous rattlesnakes slithering to strike. Each step I take hovers like mist. The muscles in my arms are tensed. My spine is arched to cloak me in the dark and out of the light from his lamp. I bare my teeth to smile. They're glistening, I can tell. I can't help it, this is too much fun.

He turns his head again. Instinct I guess. Oh he's really scared now. I can almost smell faint traces of sweat. I love that smell. Play with him. Keep him nervous. Keep him guessing. My coat rustles enough for him to turn his head again. He doesn't see anything though. Just half an inch of cloth collapsing in the shadows. That could have been the curtains. One footstep on the right floorboard is enough to make him turn around.

Just darkness. It's nothing. Go back to reading.

You're safe . . . . fool.

I'm unarmed. You can take me if you see me. Yeah right. I don't need any weapons. Ten fingers are all I need. Fingerprints? I'm not worried. I know how to cover my tracks. I can make it look like this guy died of a heart attack. I leave a few telltale marks, but then so does everyone in my profession. And they're too weird for the cops to draw any conclusions.

I'm close now, yet he still doesn't hear anything. He's convinced himself that it's just the wind or something. I could just clutch his throat and let him squirm. Naaah, this has all been too much fun. I love the stealth technique. I'll keep it quiet and swift. Something to keep the authorities wondering.

This guy won't feel a thing . . . . .

Erik Kiessling

Laura Chatterton

"easy for you"

my heart in your hands
your tiny hands
i suppose it was only a matter of time
till you dropped it
it beating so hard as to bruise you
the soft hands you used
to make lines and models
to make habits and promises
to hold my own
to hold my heart
in your hands your tiny hands
i made my best effort
to make myself fit
the way you fit
so easily
into mine
the strong hands i used
to make lines and words
to make plays and promises
to hold my own
to hold nothing
silly thinking i had your heart
but you are too good
to leave it in so poor a place
and had no trouble
reclaiming it

Olivia Bitting

My Heart

The first time I lent out my heart
Was a dramatic step, on my part.
And I never got to ask why
He left without saying good-bye.
And I thought the feeling would never pass—
That shattering of my heart of glass.

Eventually that feeling was no longer,
Actually, the experience made me stronger.
I even prepared for something drastic:
I made my new heart out of plastic.
Quite soon after, came the day
Someone melted my heart away.

But what I saw as a chance for love
Was something he did not dream of.
And so it ended as before,
And love, I knew, I'd find no more.
Again, I pulled out my tool cart
And began to rebuild my new heart.

The next time love found me.
I closed my eyes, so not to see.
But he persisted and would not bend . . .
I fought it to the bitter end.
Wouldn't you know? He left me alone.
So now my heart is made of stone.

Candice Smith

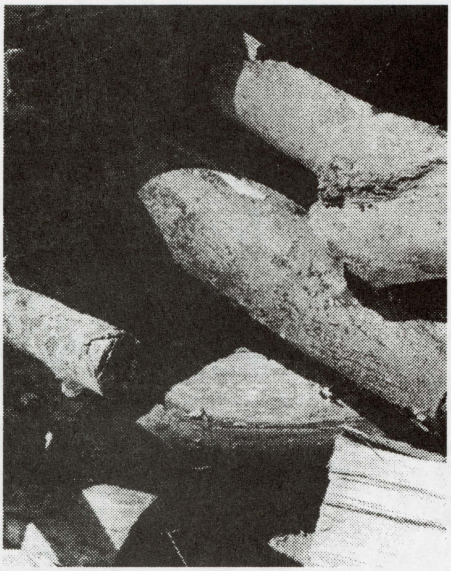
Bittersweet Addiction

Craving the possibilities, I suck it in, one hollow breath at a time. As I filter through the memories, I watch the initial flame deepen its crimson color until it fades into a dusky dense smoke that beckons me. The smoke lingers, taunting my mind, as my mouth becomes parched with the familiarity and my eyes are overwhelmed with tears. I struggle to hold them back but clenching my fists and biting my tongue are not enough because I am still remembering. I'm remembering the first time I ever saw him, the way his sun-kissed hair curled up at his shoulders, the long, slender lines of his silhouette, the way his lips turned down when he smiled. He was always packaged to perfection. I promised myself I would stay away, but I didn't, I couldn't. He drew me in like the nicotine from one of his cigarettes, except I was the one who grew addicted. The only problem was that there was no ten-step program to pull me through. I was on my own.

With him, it was like accumulating Marlboro miles: how many more days and nights did I have to endure to win the CD player, the tent, or most importantly, his love? Each day was like unwrapping a new pack; I would welcome its end with an open palm and an open mind. Would I remember my "Lucky"? Would he still be my "Lucky"? Or would I have to swallow my pride and mull over the ashes as he forgets, yet again, our dinner date, our evening plans, or another year's anniversary? How much longer could I be expected to support him on an illusion? For three years, I tucked the memories into my pocket, hoping one day they would all add up to an answer or the ultimate prize, but they were never enough.

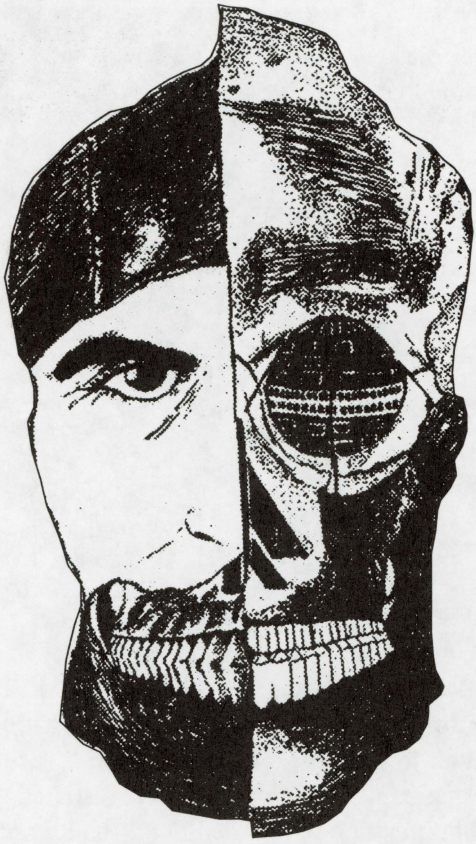
One day I had the revelation that we all wait for, the one that comes in a dream and shows you the person you've always wanted to be but never had enough guts to pursue--well, this time I decided to follow my dream and become that person. The next morning I woke up with more fire than ever and I began to fight back like a twenty year old who had just received her doctor's ultimatum--quit now, or forever reap the

consequences. I decided I would rather die trying to overcome my addiction than let myself suffocate anymore; I would no longer be his dip to mold or stay tucked away at his convenience. So I spent the next week planning my course of action: what to say, what to do, what to wear, but that wasn't enough. I needed more. I needed to make him addicted, let him see how it felt to rely on an outside source for his security, his sanity, his love. I needed him to understand what he put me through and how much strength I had to draw from within myself to tuck our relationship into a vacuum-sealed package that could be admired from a distance but never re-opened without breaking the golden bond--and that bond was what was left of our friendship.



Daniel Stapf

My plan worked, a little too well. I gave him the tantalizing taste of his own selfishness. I taunted him, I led him into the factory, tossed him onto the conveyor belt and watched him suffer the extremes of his parsimony, as each event slapped him across the face with the alarming reality of parents who just found their son smoking behind the house at the tender age of seven. For now he was a kid again; he was fitting into the mold he so tenderly made for himself; and he was accepting, with wide-innocent eyes, my transformation from an imitation of a woman to the real thing. I was no longer the girl, I was no longer innocent, or unassuming. I was bold and outspoken but



Lynn Fagley

a more complete person, and I have him to thank. So thank you, thank you for making my life an infomercial on the side effects of dating the Marlboro man himself. For the Surgeon General and I are one in the same; I have fought this drug called love and am now the poster-child of independence. I couldn't have done it without you.

Erin Killian

Say Good-bye

Freezing air whips past my ears, howls in the distance like wolves at the moon. Far off, the lights of the city twinkle as in a child's fairy tale. Cars whiz by behind me, their headlights cutting through the thick darkness of the night. I cannot see the water below, but I can hear it. Sense it. Large choppy waves smash against the piling of the bridge. I imagine I can feel the bridge shudder with each wave of black water. My legs feel stiff, as if I have no knees joints. My hands clench the cold steel beams. The world tilts at a crazy angle. My tears freeze on my face stiffening my cheeks. My coat flaps around my legs. I look up. The sky seems so close, like I could reach up and pluck a star from its inky blackness. It takes my breath away. My left foot slips on the smooth steel. I grip harder with my hands. My pounding heart is loud in my ears. Frantically, I gulp large breaths of frigid air. I scramble to keep my balance. Why do I try to keep my precarious perch? I came here to let go. To say good-bye to everything. So I mutter good-bye into the tossing wind and release my death grip on the hard cold steel.

Adina Kaddin

The Large, Black Trash Bag

Tonight she sits alone in her bedroom. This is the last night she will sleep in this room. Surrounded by boxes filled with mementos, she begins to sift through years' worth of memories. The first box she empties is filled with nothing but cards from birthdays, Hanukkah, and Valentine's Day. She makes piles of those she will save and those she will toss into the large, black trash bag beside her. She decides to get rid of anything that is from past boyfriends—Jeff her high school sweetheart, Mike whom she dated her freshman year of college, Kyle whose main interest was drinking and doing drugs, and numerous others not even worth mentioning. She will save keepsakes from her family, her girl friends, and from Jordan, the young man she is about to marry. The other boxes are filled with pictures of classmates, senior week, sorority functions, boyfriends and assorted souvenirs—everything from movie ticket stubs to prom corsages.

As Jenna makes her way through the boxes, she stops to remember times before Jordan. She picks up the picture of herself and her best friend Sarah at the prom. She smiles as she remembers the fun they had getting their hair, make-up and nails done at the salon. She is careful to set that picture off to the side. She does not want it to get mixed into the pile of trash accidentally. Not all of the memories are happy. She picks up the picture of herself with Jeff at senior week. You couldn't tell by looking at the picture that what seemed like a great vacation was really the breaking point of their relationship. A week after they returned from the beach, they broke up.

Jenna wonders why she never had the courage to throw this stuff away long ago. She used to look at the pictures and cards and cry over her lost loves. Although she has not looked through the boxes since she met Jordan three years ago, she has not disposed of their contents. She now wonders why she felt the need to torture herself for all these years. What was there to hold onto? Hope? Hope of what? That they would reconcile?

Did she even want that? She could never do anything about the fact that she and Jeff chose to go to schools 300 miles apart. She certainly could never forgive Mike for cheating. And the others just were not right for her. It all seems so silly now.

But tonight she does not cry. She remembers an old saying, "The best revenge is living well and happily." She has finally gained revenge on all those boys that left her broken-hearted. Now she has to do one more thing to make it complete. She must rid herself of these sad reminders. She has finally broken free from their hold on her. She doesn't need them anymore. She may have had to kiss a lot of frogs, but she finally found her prince. She thinks of this as a removal of warts left behind from the toads. She smiles at the thought.

Jenna thought she would just fill the trash bag with the items, but then something comes over her. She begins to rip up the pictures, the cards and the various love letters. She starts to feel better than she ever imagined. She begins to laugh, a mad laugh. She can't get over the pure pleasure she is getting from destroying these things she once felt the need to hold onto. She tears pictures into tiny pieces, crumples love letters, and pulls petals off the dried flowers she saved from various dances. She is careful not to ruin anything she has collected since meeting Jordan. Her face flushed, she takes a long, deep breath and begins to smooth down her hair with her sweaty hands.

At the end of the ritual, Jenna heaves the large, black bag over her shoulder, bounces down the steps and out of the house, and puts the bag down by the curb. She stands over the bag for a minute, then turns back toward the house, smiling.

Beth Bondroff

Autumn Love

On a cloudy Autumn day
With a chill in the air
I think of our love
And try not to care

A breeze caresses my face
Like a heavenly cherub's hand
Softly whispering not to cry
As a tear falls to the sand

All that remains is a broken heart
Yearning to find out why
After giving you everything
You aren't willing to try

Over the horizon thunder rolls
As I sit out in the cold
How I thought our love was true
And to you it just grew old

Remembering strolls on the boardwalk
Gazing at stars in the sky
Memories of our times together
Is all the more reason to cry

They say nothing is forever
But I never thought you'd leave
We were to be an exception
It is I whom time has deceived

So I sit in our old spot
With a feeling you should be here
Wishing your love was still true
As I wipe away a tear

Paula Ensor

Lost

The woods are cold and silent
as I wander their lonely depths.
I trek through the deep snow,
my tracks the only clue to my whereabouts.

Trees ladened with heavy snow
bend beneath their weighty burdens
as I do beneath mine.
Wind rushes cold,
whirling around bare trees,
howling into my soul.

Snow fills my fur-lined boots,
fingers frozen solid in woolen gloves.
Hair cold and stiff
with drops of frozen water
fallen from the gray sky.

Lost, I wander about
with no thought to my tracks
which could lead me home,
for I do not want to go where I have been
ever again.

So I softly and silently make my way
through these untouched woods
with no direction in my mind.
All I have is a past,
with no wish to return.

Adina Kadden

Haunted Rumors

Laura Hammersmith pulled into the rocky driveway and cut off the engine of her Honda Civic and cautiously pulled up the parking brake. Apprehensively, she opened the door and placed one sandal-covered foot on the driveway. After a long, deep breath she stood up and closed the door. She took a good survey of the house. It sure had been a long time since she was last here. Nervously she twisted her wedding band around on her finger. This habit always made her think of her husband, Paul. She found herself doing it any time she was nervous or afraid, and had found herself twisting the band on a regular basis lately. The pine tree she and her cousin had planted when they were five now towered above her head. "Damn," she said aloud, "it has been a long time."

She walked past the tree and looked once more at the old house. Weather had not been kind to it during her grandmother's final years. The green paint was chipping off the shutters and railing. Moss covered most of the stairs leading up to the massive front porch, which was in need of repair as well. She walked up three of the steps and sat down. "Piece by piece," she said, twisting her ring. "I'll make it there, piece by piece."

Laura scanned the scene across the street. The town of Mt. Rainier had changed since the last time she was here. The Hallan's were long gone, as were the Sampers. Their houses had been replaced by a convenience store and a parking lot. The small playground was still there, right on the comer. Memories began to flow through her mind. She remembered the time she beat her older brother in a race from the swings to the monkey bars. Mike had cried in protest and had begun chasing her. He tripped and cut his knee so badly that he had to get eight stitches. Laura laughed out loud as she re-ran the race in her mind.

"Well, I guess that's one piece; time for another. Hmm, too bad, I used to be pretty good at running," she rubbed her

right thigh. Laura stood up, brushing the dust from her pants. She stopped for a minute at the glider, remembering her cousins eating ice cream there during the summer. Smiling, she reached into the pocket of her jeans for the key to the house. She was expecting the lawyer at five and wanted to have a look around before he arrived.

Her family was relatively large; her mother's side had five sisters and three brothers. Between them, there were twenty three grandchildren. Laura remembered the shock she felt when the lawyer announced Grandma Waltrip had left the entire house to her. That had been nine years ago. Until now, this part of her past was not something she had wanted to face. This did not please the lawyer, who finally asked Laura to sign the papers for the house. He had been a family friend for as long as Laura could remember, but times were tough in Mt. Rainier, and the fact was, the lawyer needed his money just like everyone else. Laura was not bitter, she understood. After all, the lawyer had waited long enough.

For years it was well-known that Grandma Waltrip looked upon Laura with an extra sparkle. She loved Laura the best, or at least so it seemed. Laura remembered crying in her grandmother's arms when Bobby Cannon stood her up for homecoming; how her grandmother was the first fan at the finish line at the state meet in her sophomore year; and that her grandmother had been the first person she told when Paul finally asked her out. Laura and her grandmother had definitely had a strong bond, a special bond that usually only happened in movies. What made it even more special was that none of the other grandchildren were jealous. Grandma Waltrip was extremely loving to all her grandchildren, and the simple fact that Laura held a special place in her heart bothered no one.

Laura placed the worn-down key into the keyhole. The door seemed to moan as she twisted the handle and pushed it open. The bells on the other side jingled against the cracked glass, as if to wake the rest of the house. She took a deep breath and, twisting her wedding ring, entered the house.

A wave of mustiness and the scent of moth balls rushed over her. Laura reached behind the coat rack for the light switch. The lights sputtered on. The furniture was covered with plastic, and there were still several boxes unclaimed by the family. Everything else from the attic and basement had been removed long ago. Her brother, John, had picked up the remaining items from the second floor bedrooms last week.

"Ah, there it is. Good," Laura spoke out loud. "I've been waiting for this."

Laura limped over to the corner of the living room and opened the cover of her grandmother's old Panasonic record player. The grandchildren had given it to her many years ago, so they could have "the coolest grandma ever." Laura blew the dust off the heap of records and began searching through them. Grandma Waltrip had amazed her grandchildren by enjoying the music of these albums. Many times Laura would come over after school or work and hear the Doors or Led Zeppelin echoing down the front porch steps. Her grandmother eventually began buying the albums herself, and before long she indeed was the coolest grandmother in town. Crosby, Stills, and Nash was a favorite of Grandma Waltrip, as well as Rush, Bob Seger, James Taylor, Billy Joel, and Elton John. On Halloween she even liked a little Kiss. Laura began to giggle as she recalled the time Jason Myers had asked her grandmother to the senior prom. Her grandmother was truly a special person to everyone who had the pleasure of knowing her.

Laura's eyes widened when she stumbled across the Fleetwood Mac album *Rumours*. This album had been a sweet sixteenth birthday gift from her grandmother. Smiling, Laura removed the vinyl from its plastic case and placed it on the turntable. Lindsey Buckingham's energetic, young voice shattered the silence. "Loving you, isn't the right thing to do..." Laura began humming along as she slowly walked back to her car and brought up a small bag of groceries.

"You can go your own way," Laura sang as she opened up a bottle of Evian. "You can call it another lonely day." She

checked the time on her watch as she clumsily danced around the room. Buckingham's whining guitar took her back in time, back to high school. She always imagined singing this song to Bobby after he stood her up. Still singing, Laura sat down and opened a pack of saltines. She decided she would listen to one more song, then double check everything upstairs. Laura closed her eyes as Stevie Nicks' sweet swooning sang about her voice haunting Buckingham. The song seemed to fit. Laura could almost hear the voices of her family echo throughout the big old house. Tears began welling up in her eyes. She quickly wiped them away. "I did enough of this last month."

Laura approached the large wooden staircase and stared at the top for a moment. Just enough sunlight was coming through the window at the top to make out the doorway to Uncle Rick's old room. She checked her watch again. "Twenty more minutes. I hope he's not late."

The steps creaked under the weight of her slender body. Stevie Nicks still filled the house with the appropriate words. "Time cast a spell on you, but you won't forget me." Laura was calmed by this song; it was one of her favorites. She closed her eyes, twisted her wedding band a few times, then began to march up the steps. Her thigh was really starting to throb again, and she decided she could take some Advil when she got back down stairs.

She took a deep breath and closed her eyes when she got to the top of the stairs just outside the bedroom. The door still had a crack in it from the struggle. Laura's chin trembled as she ran her hand across it. This was one memory she had to force herself to face. It was the reason she put on the *Rumours* album in the first place. She had not heard it in over twenty years, until now. "Man, I could really use that Advil now," Laura said as she continued rubbing her thigh. With renewed determination, she turned to face Uncle Rick's room, her eyes swelling with tears, her throat dry, and her chest heavy. She could not go on with her life until she faced this.

The day was still vivid in Laura's mind. She had come over after track practice the day before her birthday to play checkers with her grandmother. Grandma Waltrip was baby-sitting Aunt Kerri's twin sons and gave Laura the gift early in exchange for watching her cousins for a few minutes while she went to the market. Laura was ecstatic about the album; no one in town had it in stock. It was one of the few copies the record company had produced with "Silver Springs" on it. Everyone in school would envy her. She ran into the living room and put it on immediately. Laura had not touched the album since that horrible episode. Hard as it was, Laura needed to face this memory, alone and for good.

It was about seven o'clock when her grandmother left for the market. Laura sat in the living room listening to the record and doing geometry homework while her five year old cousins watched television in the den. The sun's orange twilight was just beginning to spill in through the bay window when Laura found herself lost in the music rather than in the Pythagorium theorem. Right in the middle of "Dreams", there was a knock at the door. Expecting her best friend, she put on her favorite song, "The Chain," and ran into the foyer. Without thinking she threw open the door.

Laura froze as the memories flooded her mind. She gently pushed open Rick's door and turned on the light. The holes were still in the wall, but at least the blood stains had been cleaned up and painted over. She leaned further into the room and began to run her hands across the finger nail marks embedded in the door frame. Laura hobbled toward the center of the room and sat in the middle of the hardwood floor, reliving the event in her mind. She wrapped her arms around her knees and slowly closed her eyes. The floor creaked as she began to rock, and then she screamed, frantically looking around. After a long breath, she closed her eyes and began rocking back and forth again. The memories were so clear, so vivid, so fresh.

When she had opened the front door a large hand grabbed her face and threw her to the floor. She was so

shocked she could not even scream. The man in the ski mask yanked her up by her hair and punched her in the face. He began kicking her as she lay on the ground, nearly unconscious. All she could hear was the music; the record blocked the obscenities he was shouting. She could see blood on the floor in front of her face. Her body was numb when he pulled out his knife and ripped open her shirt. The music still played, "If you don't love me now, you will never love me again." The man picked up Laura's limp body and carried it upstairs into the first bedroom, Uncle Rick's bedroom.

One of the twins had come to ask Laura for a cookie. When he saw the intruder trying to hurt her, he ran up the stairs but was kicked in the face and fell backwards down the steps. The music continued, "I can still hear you saying you will never break the chain." At the doorway of the bedroom, Laura summoned all her strength, but to no avail. She hit the man on the right side of his face, as he threw her into the door frame. He stabbed her right thigh and then began ripping off her sweatpants. The struggle lasted only a few minutes, but it seemed like decades to Laura. "Chain, keep us together. Running through the shadows. Chain keep. . ." It was all over by the time Grandma Waltrip returned.

Laura and her cousin were in the hospital for weeks. Her cousin broke his nose, his collarbone, and two vertebrae in his fragile neck when he fell down the staircase. He never regained movement of his right arm or either of his legs and was still confined to a wheel chair. Because of the severe muscle and tissue damage in her thigh, Laura was never able to run again. Not until she met Paul did she let go of her painful past and learn to trust men again.

Downstairs on the record player, a different song began filling the crevices of the old house. "Don't stop, thinking' about tomorrow, don't stop, it'll soon be here." There was a knock at the door; the lawyer was here. Laura checked her watch, "Right on time." She wiped the tears from her face. She made the slow and painful descent down the old stairs. She reached the foyer, drew in a deep breath, and peeked behind the

curtain just to double check: Smiling, Laura opened the door and the lawyer walked in quickly.

"Listen," he said. "I have to apologize. I've got a six thirty appointment, so I'd like to be a little quick about this. Let's get to business, shall we?"

"Sure, I have plans, too. I'm going out with my husband tonight."

"Oh, I'm glad you've moved on with your life after . . . well. . . ."

"It's all right," Laura replied. "I think all those haunting rumours are gone. After all, that was all a long time ago."

"Yes, Laura, it certainly was. Do you have plans for the house?"

"I am toying with the idea of fixing it up myself."

The lawyer looked around the dusty room. "Say, this place is going to need a lot of cleaning up," he said as he sat on one of the plastic covered couches and popped open his briefcase.

"You'd be surprised how easy it will be though," Laura said smiling. "I've already done more cleaning today than I ever imagined I could."

"That's good, Laura. That's really nice to hear. Now, here are the contracts, and if you have any questions, I'll be more than happy to explain. . . . Say, that music is rather loud, let me turn it off." The lawyer stood up and approached the old Panasonic.

Laura interrupted. "No, leave it on. I've been missing that old friend for over twenty years."

She signed the contracts, bid the lawyer farewell, and sat on the couch with her eyes closed. The music seemed to sweep her off her feet just as it had so many years ago. Laura's eyes swelled with tears. She realized the 'rumours' would haunt her no more.

Joe Goforth

Thoughts

Thinking,
We all do it differently;
Each of us is the center of our world.
Being in the world
Has to do with thinking.

Common Sense or Thinking,
Value or Belief,
Remembering.

Brenda Schisler

Lynn Fagely

An Unorthodox Approach to Life, and It Works!

Some say my methods are very unorthodox.
I get improvements by thinking beyond the "Docs."
Tying weights to my walker may be considered crazy;
At least you know that I am not lazy.

The weights represent the power of choice.
After all, Sam Kinison is my mental walking voice.
I ask, is it healthy physically, mentally, and emotionally?
That's how I approach my life, theoretically!

For personal improvement I try for a certain result.
On the way there, I will try not to insult.
If I don't like the results, I change the equation.
This cuts down on my frustration and eases my situation.

I only complain about the things I can change,
This makes my life easier to re-arrange.
It might be hard to believe I don't get stressed,
I can only do my best with what I have, am I blessed?

Today I am counting my blessings--
So one day a nurse won't need to change my dressings.
In life I know there are no absolutes.
If I want a guarantee, I'll buy a toaster.

JR (Johnny Rehab) Carroll

Amy M. Saxmann

Radiation Machine

The tubular bells ring out and the
Pulsating exorcist with fluorescent eyes
Emerges from the dark side of the moon
To camouflage the sky.
Iridescent megabytes of faith, love,
And charity are released at random
To latch onto the destructive hubcaps that
Contain the absolute substance of no hope.

One turn of the golden glove and the purple haze
Begins to dissipate. The everlasting kindness
Peeks through the sunny flower trying to bloom
Some new found happiness.

Dorothy Burger

Grass

"Dan and I killed a snake yesterday."

"What?"

"We were building a dam, and he tried to get this one big rock and he accidentally squished it when he tilted it," I said.

"That is so gross."

"We had to put it out of its misery then. We hit it with a rock."

"That is so gross," she told me. I leaned back on my elbows on the blanket she had brought. I hadn't asked why she had it; I assumed it was to protect her from bugs, and knowing her, it was a fair assumption. Except the bugs were flying. I smiled at the thought, but hid it in a sip of my soda.

"It was a really good dam, though," I said as I studied the can.

"Was?"

"Well, it is, I mean." And then we were silent for a while. She was sitting with her knees drawn up to her chest on one corner of the blanket. I could smell her, like my entire sophomore year in biology class when I could always smell her. It was a hot day, and I was wearing jeans and a black T-shirt. I wondered if she might be able to smell me soon.

The tall grass around us was waving in the breeze. Tara and I used to walk through this field all the time, as it was behind the development she lived in. Only she lived somewhere else by then. We once stumbled upon a dead deer in this field. I wondered how far I was from the spot. I wondered what Cari would think if I mentioned it. I wondered what the hell I was doing there.

"This is so fucking weird," I announced. She laughed like an explosion, short and loud. She was smiling as she studied the small, open cooler next to her, or the soda and bottled water in it. She only drank water, I knew, so why the soda? Odd thing that she was. She'd been alone when I found

her as I walked through the field, reliving memories. I'd been looking for the happiness I'd known with Tara, but it had gone away before she ever did. I'd seen Cari, on her blanket, from a distance, and I'd stopped. I'd remembered how I walked past her house every day of two summers, on my way to see Tara, but I never met Cari, or even knew she was alive until my sophomore year of high school.

She hadn't seen me, as I stood in the grass. I could have walked back, as I'd come, unnoticed. But that's not my way. I had approached her several times in the year since our friendship ended, but it had been a while. This was different, because I was not afraid. So much had changed. So I'd walked right up and said hello, and for once, she didn't strike me down with her eyes. She was surprised, but she offered me a seat and a soda. She must have been waiting for someone, that's why the soda.

"Yeah, this is weird."

"So who are you waiting for?" I wanted to ask how she'd been all this time, but I knew. I wanted to tell her who I was when we'd been friends, and who I am now. But I didn't.

"Jeremiah."

"Oh, ok," I said. The boyfriend, I'd heard. I wanted to tell her about my girlfriend, so maybe she wouldn't see me as "the girl who used to have a crush on her" anymore. I was silent. I wanted to tell her what I thought of our brief letters, the times I was weak and sought her out, and how she'd answered me. I wanted to tell her those answers set me free, because they finally revealed to me who she was, and that she was not what I wanted. I wanted to tell her how I was beyond her, not behind her as I had thought. I drank my soda.

"How are you?"

I was shocked. The strange part was that it shocked me that she asked, not that she cared. I wanted to explain these things, too, the way I cared and knew she cared. I only answered simply.

"I'm good. How are you?"

"Fine." I wanted to say I thought she was lying. I did not. I saw Jeremiah coming towards us through the tall grass. I stood.

"Thanks for the soda," I said. "See you around, maybe."

"You're welcome," she answered. Then she added, "Yeah, maybe. Maybe we will."

I nodded and walked away through the grass, and it parted to make way for me, just like her life had done, like a lot of people's lives were doing.

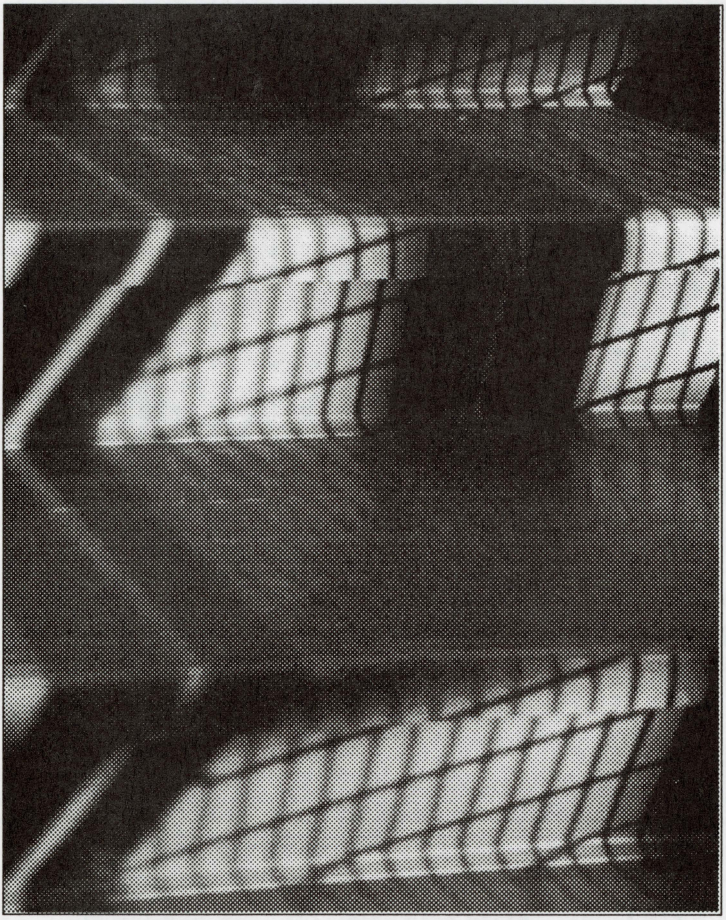
Behind me the grass fell shut again, leaving only a gentle waving that may have been the wind's doing, to say I'd been there.

Olivia Bitting

Where do people go when they die?

Where do people go when they die?
Some say you go to heaven to be with God;
Others say that it's all over at the moment you die;
While still others say you are reincarnated
and come back again.
I don't know where people go when they die.
All I have is Faith.

John Boyle



Dana DeRegemis

The Golden Age

The grand mansion stands atop Beverly Hills Drive as a monument to the halcyon days of Hollywood and its occupant, the top star of the '30's and '40's, George L'Amour. Now, sixty years after that heyday, the mansion, and George, are both shadows of their past grandeur. In George's glory days, he was a tall, strapping man, well over six feet tall (some say he wore lifts), dark, wavy hair, deep blue eyes, and a smile that made the ladies (and more than a few men) swoon. He was regularly in competition with Cary Grant for the best roles. He excelled in romantic comedies but could handle melodramas (or "women's pictures" as they were called then) just as well.

Villa L'Amour seems to be made for George. Built by some forgotten silent-era star, the mansion has twenty-three rooms, an indoor swimming pool, and a private screening room in the basement. The rooms are trimmed in rich cherry wood, and the hardwood floors are polished to the point that one could skate on them. The huge dining room, with a twenty-foot mahogany table, was the scene of many parties (at least they started there), and stories always floated around town about who really ended up with whom. Villa L'Amour was the site of many lavish costume balls as well as intimate dinners for a select group. An invitation from George L'Amour was never turned down. From Bogart and Bacall to Hepburn and Tracy, all the top stars and their various spouses (and lovers) were always in attendance.

But time has taken them all, and George is the last star from Hollywood's Golden Age. Visitors are rare, and except for a manservant and housekeeper, George is the only occupant of Villa L'Amour. Now in his late eighties (according to published reports) and in frail health, George surrounds himself with memorabilia and photographs from that bygone era, and remembers the days when he was a star. His hair is nearly gone, the teeth have been replaced by dentures, and he seems to have lost a few inches from his height (of course he doesn't

need the lifts anymore). But the eyes, the deep blue eyes, still give a hint at the beauty this man once possessed.

Most people don't even know George is still alive, although the occasional retrospectives of his films elicit invitations to appear and speak about his career. Ever the consummate celebrity, George always makes it a point to attend. It is at these functions that George comes to life. He turns on the charm (and humility) claiming how touching it is to see such a diverse group of people, especially the younger ones, who appreciate his old films. He says he never imagined that after sixty years anyone would still be interested in him or his work, but like all stars he believes that everything he did would render him immortal.

But today is just an ordinary day, like most. George rises at 7:00 a.m., and is served breakfast prepared by Josephine, his housekeeper of forty years. She prepares (as usual) a meal of scrambled eggs, sausage, toast, orange juice, coffee, and a sweet roll. Once in a while Josephine may prepare blueberry pancakes, but these are more for special occasions like George's birthday or the Oscars. George may read the paper, but more often than not, he'll go to the sitting room to watch television. Game shows and soap operas are his favorites, particularly "The Edge of Tomorrow," which featured George as the mature romantic lead after his film roles dried up in the '60's (after a string of box office bombs and Grade-B horror films with Joan Crawford). A few of his co-stars, like leading lady Vivian Alemain and his TV daughter Susan Banks, are still on the show, and it gives George some comfort to see them every day.

Harold, the manservant, brings George a light lunch (ham and cheese sandwich, potato salad, glass of milk) at 1:00 p.m. while "Edge" is on. At 5:00 p.m., Harold draws a bath for his master and lays out a casual dress outfit for dinner (George is from the old school where one always dresses for dinner). The grand dining room now seats only George. The seven-course meals have been replaced by a bowl of soup, a main

dish, and dessert. After dinner, usually around 7:00 p.m., George takes a snifter of brandy and goes to the screening room. It is here that George is happiest, as Harold runs one of George's old films (or one of his old friends').

Bedtime is at 10:00 p.m. (unless the night's feature is "Gone With the Wind"). Harold helps Mr. L'Amour to his room and into his bedclothes. As George settles in for a long night's sleep, Harold turns off the lights and quietly leaves the room. George looks forward to sleep, because for a few hours, at least, he is once again the toast of Hollywood.

Charles Duncan

Joe Goforth

Living in the Shadow

I am the one you never see,
The one you'll never know,
For I was not meant to be.

I live in the shadow
Of the one you want me to be,
The one you want to know.

She's talented and intelligent
And even a little eloquent,
She's rude and always mean,
And bossy, like a queen,
And she never falls in love.

But if you could only see,
The one who lives in me.
I'm sweet and even pretty.

I fall in and out of love,
I'm likeable and friendly
And owner of a warm heart.

Oh, if you could only see me.

Wendy Valle

Kellie's Story

Standing there in front of the school auditorium brought back many memories of Kellie. I remember coming here to see Kellie in the school play and when she received her honor society card at the end of every year. But this time I was here not to see Kellie, but to inform parents about the use of drugs by their children. I was here to tell them what happened to my baby. I was here to warn them about what to look for and how to respond. I stepped into the auditorium and made my way up to the podium. My speech began.

Who would have believed that my daughter would turn out to be a statistic-the one in five high school children who becomes addicted to drugs?

I was twenty-three when my daughter Kellie was born. She was my pride and joy, all that I ever lived for. I was a single mother for the majority of her young life, at least for the first five years. She was always an excellent child. She never gave me any sort of trouble. I lived with my parents, and my mother helped me raise Kellie.

When she was five, I met Russell. By the time she was six, Russell and I were married. Kellie and Russell seemed to have a close relationship. Russell and I had twins, Matthew and Bethany. When the twins, were born, I worried that Russell would ignore Kellie, but this was never the case.

Kellie attended a local public school. She enjoyed learning and going to school. She was very popular. She belonged to various clubs and was a cheerleader for the high school football and basketball teams. Kellie never had any academic difficulties, and always carried a B average which earned her second honors. She had dreams of becoming a teacher and knew that she had to do well in school.

In her junior year at Pratt High School, I started to realize things were not as perfect as they seemed to be. Kellie began to skip school, and her grades began to drop. She was moody, but I passed it off as a phase and did nothing about it.

Day after day I fought with Kellie to get her up and out of bed for school. This was strange for Kellie, because she was always eager to learn. She began to hang out with a new crowd at school and dropped all of her other friends. She had new boyfriends weekly and sometimes came home with marks on her neck. Things started to turn up missing from Kellie's room and money disappeared from my purse. I discovered Kellie had been pawning her things. Why I did not know, but the pawn slips were everywhere in her room. She no longer had the TV, stereo, VCR, and boom box that she had begged her father and me to buy for her. I did not know what to do or what to say to Kellie, because this was not the daughter that I had known. So my answer was to do nothing. I felt she might have a problem. All the signs were there. But it did not seem major enough to be drugs, so I dismissed it. Peer pressure had taken over and absorbed my daughter. She had turned into a selfish, non-caring, moody, irresponsible child.

One morning while I was doing my usual cleaning, I came across a clear plastic bag with a white powder in it. I was unsure of exactly what it was. That evening I showed it to Russell, and that is when I found out the truth: my daughter was using cocaine. The next morning when Kellie came down for breakfast, Russell and I showed her what I had discovered. She denied that it was hers and ran out of the house. Hurt and scared, I tried to make myself believe that Kellie was telling the truth, but my gut knew better. She had lied to me and I was scared and did not know what to believe or what to do.

At first I blamed myself, believing something I had done made Kellie act this way. Over time I realized Kellie had made this choice without me, and I was left to try and save her. In her senior year of high school, I found out the truth. Kellie was addicted to cocaine.

Three weeks after I found the bag, the school nurse called me at home. She told me they had found Kellie passed out in the girls' locker room and had sent her to the hospital. My daughter had overdosed. This crushed me, and I did not

know what to do. All I could think of was what had I done to cause Kellie to resort to drugs. Maybe I hadn't spend enough time with her? Could I have done something sooner?

We sat in the waiting room of the hospital for hours before a doctor told us Kellie's condition. She was in critical and unstable condition. I wanted to see my daughter, to hold her and protect her. We went back to her room. She was lying in the bed with what seemed like thousands of tubes sticking out of her body. She was pale, thin and had deep, dark circles under her eyes. Why hadn't I noticed? All of the signs were there. Why hadn't I opened my eyes sooner? I spent the night sitting next to my daughter's bed as she fought for her life. At 5:05 a.m. she died. The drugs had weakened her heart; it could no longer pump enough blood to keep her alive.

Looking back, I realize Kellie had exhibited all the classic signs of a child addicted to drugs. How could I have passed it off as a phase? Where was my head? I guess I just didn't want to admit that my daughter had a problem, a problem I thought only inner-city children had. She had had everything she wanted. She didn't need to resort to drugs to find fulfillment in her life. She had the perfect life, or so I thought.

That was five years ago, and I remember it like it was yesterday. I watch my other two children and worry that they might make the wrong decision sometime. There is no greater pain than watching your child self-destruct right in front of your eyes and not know what to do to prevent it.

As I stepped away from the podium, all was quiet. Slowly I walked up the center aisle, wiping the tears from my eyes. As I pushed open the heavy door of the auditorium, the applause began. When I turned around, I realized that my story had touched the lives of these parents. Many of the parents came up to me later and thanked me for speaking about my daughter's death. I hope that through my speech, I can save some child from the fate that Kellie met.

Catherine Butler

Stars

Once again you have left me on the sidelines
waiting my turn to think,
to feel, to love
Where is the rulebook you once swore by?
The one that would tell me my position in your games?
I need it now.
You've run too far ahead leaving your trophies to tarnish
and your memories to fade.
I used to be your number one, now I am out of the running.
Your pride, your drive, your aggression
beating out your empathy,
your warmth, your compassion
your love of the game, your love of life.
Where do I send your letters of encouragement,
your clippings of praise?
You've made yourself one of the stars--out of reach--
blinded by the light.
For I see it now, brighter than ever before.
I need it now to guide me back into the game,
So that once again we could play together
For when we did, we were truly unbeatable.

Erin Killian

My Boy

There he goes out the door—
Walking to meet the morning bus.
Seven years old with straight brown hair,
That is styled like a bowl. He has golden
Brown eyes that sparkle when he laughs.
The little man with focused determination,
To be on time, and the first one in line.
His hair neatly combed, shirttail tucked in,
He carries his Batman lunch box tightly
In his left hand and has the back pack slung over
His right shoulder. He kisses me on the sly for
Fear that the other boys might tease him.
Once aboard # 136, he sneaks one last wave
Before embarking on yet another day in the
Life of a first grader.

Every day is a different color I say—
We just never know what you will do next.
You were like Bam-Bam when you were small.
Now you have graduated to the name of TAZ.
Always sweet with a shit eatin' grin. You have mastered
The art of tearing apart a room in five minutes. Your mind
Is like a sponge. Absorbing and memorizing assorted
Details are your natural talent.
How quickly you have grown.

You crash through the front door and that was
My hello. The lunch box made a sharp left by the
Chair and the book bag bounced off the dog's back.
You can't stay in the house long enough to tell
Me about your day. Your hair's a mess, the bangs
Are hanging slightly below your brow line.
Your shirttail is pulled out and somehow you managed
To get a grass stain on one knee of your Levis.

And a new hole in the other from the bus stop to home.
You grab an apple and run out the back door.
You are always in such a rush to go see your friends.
"Get out of the woods!" The woods are not the bathroom.
If you had taken an extra minute to pee when you came
Home from school, then I wouldn't have to hear
From the neighbor's tattle-tale kid that you peed outside.

You stole my heart the day you were born.
Ten pounds and nine and a half ounces of you were
Extracted from me in a heat wave. I still like to
Watch you sleep. As I watch you I am reminded of
The wonder and splendor of life. Yes, you drive me crazy!
Yes, you make me proud. Dream of baseball, hockey, and
Gameboy. The laughter I hear when you play is now a
Distant memory. I can only hear the soft
Purring of your slumber.

Dorothy Burger

"seeing you again"

not a face in all this world
could give me contented rest
but your face
my face tells me things and gives me strength
but your face is the end of the world
the source of most all i have known of joy
and you are not mine
but i know
i will never lose you
and seeing you yesterday
did me more good
than all the love my friends gave
or all their warm embraces
and your arm around me in the rain
warmed me more
than they ever could
for you are my love
and i will see you
i will take you out
and i will never lose you
i feel we ought to be together
and someday when we both have
lived through all we care to
we will find each other
and i will ask you
with no fear
knowing that the answer matters not
only that i asked, only that you know
there is no place i go to be free of you
i would not do so much as try
and with you i stay
through all dark nights
and all cold mornings
and all bright days

you are with me, love
never to go
and i know
we are apart
and your love has changed
but i told you not to forget
and you said the word

Olivia Bitting

All I Need

All I need is for you to hold me,
When my world is falling apart.

All I need is for you to listen,
When my tears don't want to end.

All I need is for you to smile
And say you love me,
To make my day seem bright.

And all I need is to see that look in your eyes,
To know that your heart is mine.

Brian C. Douglass

A Stranger's Ears

He cowered inside the covered bridge. He knew the other boys would be there soon, but he had to stop and catch his breath. The bridge was such an obvious place to hide, but he hoped that maybe the others would pass right by, believing he couldn't be that stupid. He heard footsteps. Then he heard their breathing.

"Oh Jason! Jaaason! You're not in there, are you?" said the boy with the gray tooth. Right in the mouth . . . that was where he took a baseball a few years before. His discolored tooth was his trophy.

"Come on, Jason. We know you can hear us. What's the matter, boy? Are your ears so heavy you just had to stop and take a rest? Oh Jason, Jason **Ear**-nest. We just want to talk to you," teased Morgan Potter.

"Let's go, Pots. That big-eared Dumbo ain't worth bustin' a knuckle," reasoned Gray Tooth..

They left, but Jason Ernest remained still for the next hour, too scared to move. He envisioned the two older boys pretending to leave but really waiting for him to come out. No. Jason couldn't take that chance. He waited until he heard Old Man Jackson passing by on his tractor. The frail little boy ran out of hiding and waved furiously, trying to get the old man's attention. He hitched a ride home aboard the John Deere.

The next day at school, Jason found his locker already opened. He glanced cautiously around the hallway but didn't see anyone suspicious. Feeling paranoid, the boy reached inside for his morning books. Something pricked his fingers; he withdrew his hand quickly. He stepped back and started to turn away. Curiosity compelled him to go back. He straightened his frail shape and clenched his teeth. Slowly and steadily he raised his slender fingers and forced them back inside the dark recesses of his locker. His fingertips met the unfamiliar mass, and with eyes clenched tight, the small boy withdrew a bird's nest.

Jason heard some snickering and these words down the hall. "Did you see him jump back? That was classic! Could you do it again? Hey, Jason Ear-nest, we're talkin' to you, boy! We know you can hear us. Why, your ears are so damn big the birds could make their nest in 'em."

The small boy threw down the nest and, forgetting his books, ran to the safety of his homeroom. His teacher, Miss Bishop, noticed he was out of breath. She also saw no books. She started to reprimand him but stopped as she gazed into his frightened eyes. After class Miss Bishop approached the boy and asked what was the matter. He tried to shrug her off, but his pallid complexion was a giveaway. "All you need to do is give me names," she stated. "That's all." Her look was genuine, but Jason knew how much worse it would make things if he told.

In the cafeteria at lunch, Gray Tooth approached Jason. The small boy slouched and tried to hide behind the taller boy in line next to him, but Gray Tooth had already seen his unshapely form.

"You know, Dumbo, they got peanuts on the shelf right over there next to the potato chips. They're in pretty big bags though for a little feller like you. I got it! If you can't eat 'em all, just store the rest inside your big ole ears. There's plenty a room in them things."

Then the bully walked away, leaving the younger boy totally humiliated. Even though the other kids in the cafeteria line weren't egging Gray Tooth on, they weren't telling him off either. Jason Ernest graciously accepted the brown mush from the cafeteria attendant. Then he walked to an empty table and ate his lunch alone . . . And so passed Jason Ernest's grade school years.

. . . Jason stood in front of his full-length mirror, noticing the changes in his body. He was much taller—the past summer had been kind to him. Although his body was still a bit

lanky, there were definite traces of muscle definition in his arms and legs. The boy smiled. As his gaze travelled upward from his legs to his arms, eventually his eyes met the eyes of the mirror. The corners of his mouth straightened. His ears were still the same. Well, maybe not. They did seem to conform to his head a little better than in the past. Jason turned his head and looked at his profile in the mirror. He rolled his eyes as far as he could into a sideward glance to get the full effect of what people standing next to him saw. The smile returned to Jason's lips, and he looked almost confident as he ventured out the door to his first day of high school.

His science class fascinated him. Enrolled in the Advanced Achievement program, Jason's science teacher had the class dissect a frog their first day. Young Ernest volunteered to go first, then proceeded to delicately place the scalpel on the underside of the creature. With precision, he cut while saying, "I am now entering via the rectus abdominis muscle. This will allow us to view some of the creature's organs—the frog's heart, gall bladder, pancreas, and stomach, to name a few." The rest of the class, including Jason's teacher, just stared, mouths opened, as the boy proceeded with the surgery.

After class one of the other students approached him. "Hey man! How did you remember how to do that? I've only seen a frog dissection once. How many did you get to see in Junior High?"

"Only one," stated Jason with a smug look. Jason couldn't believe it. He was actually having a good day at school. He felt he deserved to give the other student a smug look even though he had never met him before. It was a right he had earned after the years of hell he went through in elementary school.

It had been a rough morning with all that showing off in his classes. In math, Jason had to get up in front of the entire class and explain the Quadratic Formula. The teacher had been trying unsuccessfully for nearly a half hour, and when Jason tried to interject from his seat, the-teacher said, "You might as

well come on up here and show the rest of them." So he did.

With all the hard work, Jason welcomed lunchtime. The cafeteria was a mad house with cheerleaders practicing their routines and a few band members tuning their instruments. Young Ernest just wanted to get his food and find a quiet corner so he could study.

With tray in hand and his bookbag over both shoulders, Jason began to hunt for a free table. Suddenly he felt a sharp pain and realized he had fallen. His roast beef and mashed potatoes covered the cafeteria floor, and blood from his nose oozed, creating red gravy. "Is that you, Jason? It is! Hey everyone, it's Jason **Ear**-nest! Did you fall? Damn, and on your first day at school. That really sucks man. Your shirt's a mess. . . Hey! Where are you going? Come back! I'm just tryin' to help!"

Jason was devastated. Not only was he at the same school again with Gray Tooth, but the older boy had grown into a man's body and worse yet, he was a senior.

The years that followed resembled elementary school only with more humiliation. The good thing was that Jason never saw Gray Tooth in any of his classes because Ernest was in the Honors program. The bad thing was that phys ed and lunch in the cafeteria were unavoidable. There were countless incidences including red hot ointment accidentally finding its way in Jason's jock, and getting locked in his own locker, but the worst and most degrading gag left a certain private area on Jason's body hairless and sensitive.

. . . Jason's interest in science and math guided him to medicine. In college, he decided he would study to be a doctor and then go on to med-school. In college, away from home, all the harassment and demeaning pranks stopped. It was as if Jason finally grew into himself. His ears were still big, but on a campus with thousands of others with big-ears, big-noses or big anything, students just blended in. Jason was eighteen years-

old and finally alive.

After med-school, Jason went on to work in the ER at a hospital seventeen miles from his home town. Although he was close, he had no reason to return. He didn't have any family members still living there, and he certainly didn't have any friends. Still he was curious.

One afternoon, a call came through to the hospital. An ambulance was on the way to the ER with a victim from a motor cycle accident. Dr. Ernest was on call.

The victim's misery could be heard as he came down the hallway.

"It hurts, damn it! My side, it hurts! Somebody better give me somethin' for this god damn pain. I ain't gotta take this!"

Just then Dr. Ernest approached the patient and began checking his vital signs.

"Take it easy, Doc. I'm hurtin' real bad. My whole side feels like its been torn off."

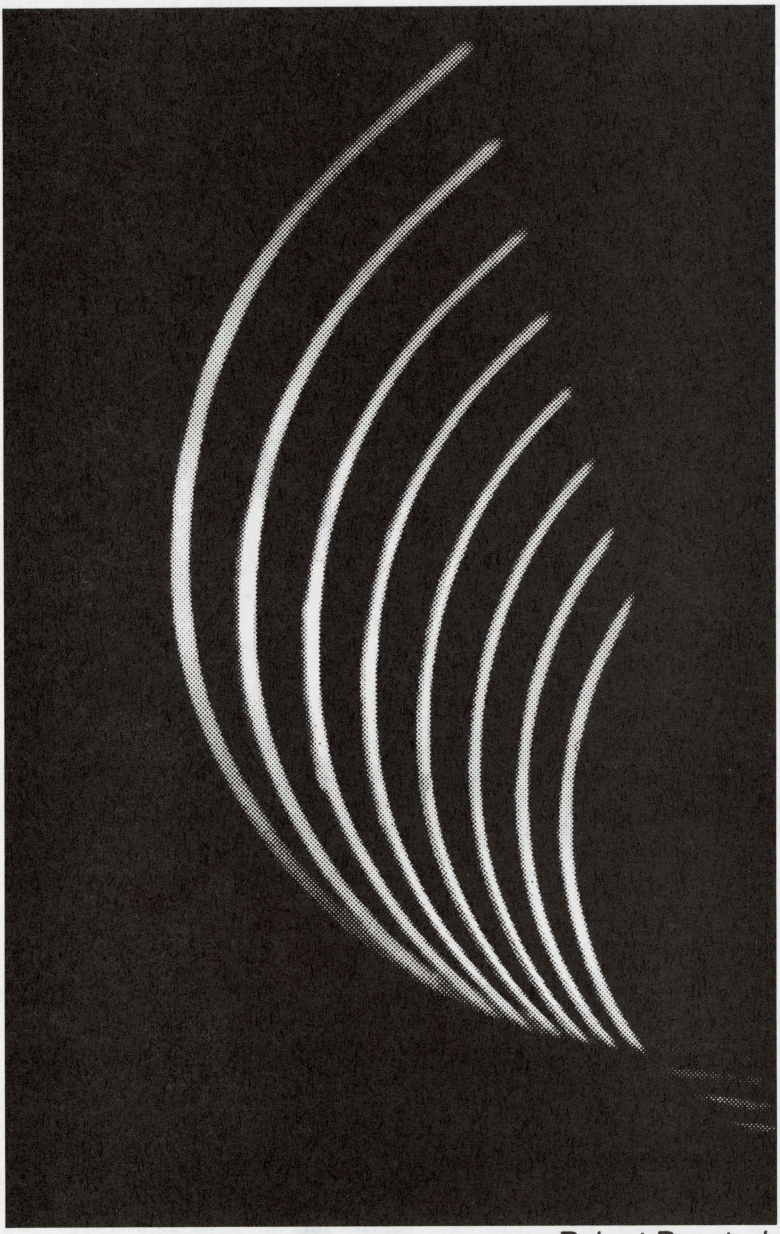
"Well, it has."

The patient gave a weak laugh. "Ooh, don't make me laugh, Doc. Please don't make me laugh." He looked up from the hospital bed into the face of the man who was tending him. He noticed the surgeon's cap and glasses, but there was something else that seemed familiar. He thought, "Has this guy fixed me before? Who the hell . . ." As he made his discovery, his mouth dropped open and revealed one gray tooth. The doctor continued his exam.

Jason had had a rough day at the hospital and welcomed supper. His stomach was growling furiously, but he didn't have the energy to cook. He thought of a familiar and quaint restaurant just about seventeen miles from the hospital. He would go there.

As he drove through the covered bridge, memories flooded Jason's mind, but it seemed to Dr. Ernest that the bridge was shorter now.

Ann Jeppi



Robert Doestsch

lovesick

an officer of the law and a flashlight in your face
the big dipper, baby, and now i don't feel so far away
will you still want it, will i want you, when the time comes?
"we'll work it out"
"we'll work it out"
and if i had her, what could you ever mean to me?
could you have struck me so hard with your tiny hands?
you did like i'd do, baby, you made sure, tried to be true
"i miss you" when we hang up the phone and i can't say
"i love you"
and that first night i kissed you
we stopped at a friend's to get my movie back
and she was having a nervous breakdown
we listened to her for an hour
and she asked me about being gay, of course,
"do you just wake up one morning, and
POOF?"
and i laughed
but you didn't
and i asked what color the car was
Amy said black
and i said "it's as if you've been told, your whole life, that that
car
is
black.
and you wake up one morning and think, 'that car kind of looks
blue to
me
and come to think of it, i've always kind of thought
it was blue.' and then you're scared because your mom says it's
black."
and both of you laughed
that was the first night for the big dipper, baby, and you
showed me a

glowing orange planet
and i asked what was on your mind
and you told me shameful joy for the news of my break-up
and asked me what i was thinking
i said shameful anxiety for you to choose me
and not him
so you said he was history and what that meant for me
you hit me again when you said
you wanted to make sure i didn't get hurt
so i kissed you.
and one day i said you were beautiful
and you said i was too
and you brought me a rose for no reason
so i kissed you.
and you let me drive your truck, it's your baby, but you said i am too
so i kissed you.
you told me once that you hoped we'd always hang out, even if something
happened to us
and i smiled because i knew that meant something
only i was too lovesick to know just what
just like now i'm too lovesick to know when to stop
i write words for you just for the joy of looking at words that are for
you
and i love that officer's flashlight
and i love the big dipper
because they made images of us that i'll never forget
and i like to think we're in love, baby.

Olivia Bitting

Congratulations
to
The Spectrum
from the
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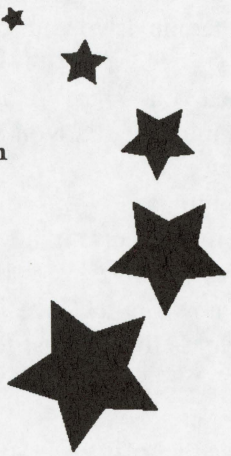
Congratulations from

The Evening Division

"Where the STARS
Come out at Night"



"The object of art is to give life shape."
-Jean Anouilh

Congratulations to all the shapers at Villa Julie

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plan a cookout
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discover community service
create a memory
be a leader!!!!

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As we celebrate the college's
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in pride for all has been accomplished,

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